



## In This Issue:

Cold Weather Safety Tips

Wood Heating Safety

Wildfire Home Triage Project

Scam Prevention

## Neighborhood Watch Newsletter Jan-Feb 2015

Starting in January of 2015,

There are several areas of Grants Pass that are especially vulnerable to wildfire. In an effort to be better prepared to prevent or mitigate wildfires, representatives from the Department of Public Safety, Fire and Rescue Division will be conducting neighborhood assessments of residential properties located within these areas. Generally, neighborhoods at risk are located on the hillsides surrounding Grants Pass and adjacent to forest lands.

The assessment will look at several features of the properties including access, home construction, landscaping and other vegetation, defensible space, topography, and firefighter safety issues. The information collected will help firefighters be better able to defend these neighborhoods during a major wildfire. Information gathered on each neighborhood will be stored in a data base which firefighters can access during a wildfire. This Information will also be available for property owners to help them take action to perform work around their homes making them more defensible in the event of wildfire.

Homes that are properly prepared are better able to survive a wildfire event without major damage. Anyone desiring more information regarding wildfire preparation and actions to take to better protect their homes can call Bob Schumacher, Firewise Communities Coordinator at 541-450-6205.

### Grants Pass Department Of Public Safety

#### Contact Information:

##### Non-Emergency

541-450-6260

##### Fire

541-450-6200

##### City Hall

541-450-6000





### **Cold Weather Safety Tips**

Every year throughout the United States, during cold weather, tragedy strikes hundreds of families. Statistics show that fires related to heating appliances such as portable space heaters, wood stoves and fireplaces cause a dramatic increase in residential fires. The Grants Pass Department of Public Safety wants you to remain safe during cold weather. Please review the following safety tips with your family.

#### **Portable Heaters**

- Give heaters space. Put at least 36 inches of empty space between the heater and everything else, like furniture, curtains, papers and people.
- Vacuum and clean the dust and lint from all heaters. A buildup of dust and lint can cause a fire.
- Check the cord on portable electric heaters. If the cord gets hot, frayed or cracked have the heater serviced.
- Never use extension cords with portable electric heaters; it is a common cause of fires.
- Turn off portable heaters when family members leave the house or are sleeping.
- An adult should always be present when a space heater is used around children.
- Make sure your portable electric heater is UL approved and has a tip-over shut off function.

#### **Smoke Alarms and Home Escape Plans**

- Smoke alarms are your first line of defense if a fire occurs in your home. Working smoke alarms alert you to a fire and more than double your chances of surviving a fire. In a fire, minutes could mean the difference between life and death.
- Install smoke alarms in every home, on every level, outside each sleeping area and in each bedroom.
- Test and vacuum your smoke alarms each month to make sure they are working.
- Smoke alarms ten years old or older need to be replaced with new units.
- When the smoke alarm sounds, get out fast!

Plan your escape; know two ways out of every room.

- Practice your escape plan with your whole family at least twice a year.

#### **Carbon Monoxide**

Carbon Monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that is a product of combustion. Carbon Monoxide strikes with very little warning and can kill you.

If you have a Carbon Monoxide source in your home such as natural gas, propane, wood or oil heat, or an attached garage, install Carbon Monoxide alarms wherever you install smoke alarms.

Have a licensed service technician inspect heating units that produce Carbon Monoxide at the beginning of the heating season.

Carbon Monoxide detectors are required to be provided for all new construction and in all rental units where a carbon monoxide source is present.



### **Prevent Frozen Pipes**

Water has a unique property in that it expands when it freezes. This expansion puts tremendous pressure on whatever is containing it, including metal and plastic pipes.

Drain hoses and nonessential plumbing before freezing weather hits.

Insulate all pipes in unheated areas.

Install insulated covers over exterior hose bibbs.

If unable to access pipes in unheated areas, leave a trickle of water running from a faucet. This will help the water not to freeze.

To thaw frozen pipes, open a faucet and use an electric heat source such as a blow dryer or heating pad wrapped around the pipe. Start from the open faucet and work back. **DO NOT USE OPEN FLAME DEVICES TO THAW PIPES!**

For more tips or information regarding safety in your home, please contact the Fire Prevention Office at 541-450-6200.

### **DON'T LET YOUR DREAMS GO UP IN SMOKE!**

There's no place like home while watching a roaring fire in your fireplace on a cold day. Fireplaces and wood burning stoves can provide economical heat. When these sources of warmth are not properly maintained, they can be dangerous and could result in a chimney fire.

When wood is burning, it gives off creosote, tars and resins. These products collect in the flue liner. If these products are allowed to build up, they may ignite and burn vigorously inside the chimney. Creosote ignites at 451 degrees and can turn anybody's chimney into a raging inferno of 2,100 degrees within seconds.

The following tips are provided to you from your Fire Prevention Office:

- Chimneys should be inspected and cleaned by professionals who use wire brushes and hi-tech vacuum cleaners.
- Home flues equipped with wood burning stoves should be inspected prior to wood burning season. Dangerous deposits can build up in any flue, even those venting coal, oil or gas furnaces.
- Check your flue regularly for any obstructions such as squirrel or bird nests, debris, etc.
- A standard ABC extinguisher should be on hand.
- Learn about seasoned woods and which type of woods is best to burn. Only hardwoods should be used as fuel, since softwoods have a high content of creosote and resin. Remember, hardwood trees have leaves and softwood trees have needles.
- Building materials, such as 2X4's, paneling, plywood and treated lumber should never be used as fuel due to a high heat release rate and may contain adhesives and creosote. Most also give off extremely toxic and harmful gases.
- Open the draft wide; do not pile on the wood and smother the fire because that builds up creosote in your stove and chimney. High flames burning hot will burn clean.
- Install a spark shield/arrestor or wire screen on top of your chimney. The chimney should rise at least two feet higher than the roof peak or any tall, nearby objects.
- Always use a fireplace screen or glass doors. Do not keep your wood burning stove door open unless you have a screen or glass door backup.
- Clean ashes out of fireplace or stove interior regularly and dispose of properly. Do not place in cardboard boxes or paper bags.



The Grants Pass Department of Public Safety has received numerous calls from concerned citizens regarding phone calls and mail they have received from out of state businesses or individuals. The mail they are receiving contains a letter explaining that they have won a prize/money, or have been chosen to participate in some event where they will receive a small fee for their participation.

Often a check will be enclosed with the business name on it. The check appears valid and legitimate if it is deposited. The letter further directs the recipient to deposit the check, then purchase 'Green Dot Cards' which are prepaid credit cards. The company requests that those cards be mailed to them, and the recipient keeps the rest of the money that was deposited. After the victims have cashed the check, mailed the green dot cards and spent their earnings, the bank informs them that the check was not legitimate and the victim is out that money.

- If you receive a check in the mail or a phone call requesting money, with the promise of payment back to you, consider these points:
- If you have not contacted the company before, it is highly likely that you will be the victim of a scam if you participate. If it appears too good to be true, it usually is.
- If you have not heard of the business or company before, get to know everything about the company. Contact the Better Business Bureau, your local police department, your bank or an attorney.
- Do not rely on the information given in the letter. Often times the suspects may be using the name of a legitimate company, using stolen checks or checking account numbers, or using an untraceable but legitimate phone number. Once the suspects have your information, they will not stop calling and may even threaten you and your family with criminal charges or civil lawsuits until you provide them with the money.
- Verify all of the information before sending any money. If the caller or individual is purporting to be a family member, contact additional family to determine their location.

If you have any questions, please contact Officer Lesley Donaghy, Grants Pass Department of Public Safety Crime Prevention Bureau at 450-6245.